CLAIMS:

1. A device (1) for controlling the sound levels of a group of audio channels comprising a main channel (MC) and at least one auxiliary channel (AC1) which can be rendered simultaneously, the device comprising:

- user controlled selection means (14, 16) for selecting the main channel, and
- automatic level adjustment means (12, 13) for adjusting the sound level of the at least one auxiliary channel relative to the main channel.

2. The device according to claim 1, wherein the selection means (14, 16) are arranged for selecting successive available channels in response to user input (Sel).

3. The device according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the level adjustment means (12, 13) are arranged for providing pre-set relative sound levels.

4. The device according to claim 3, further arranged for altering the pre-set relative sound levels by the user.

5. The device according to claim 1, wherein the level adjustment means (12, 13) are arranged for adapting the respective sound levels to the content of each associated audio channel (AC1, AC2).

6. The device according to claim 5, further arranged for adapting the respective sound levels to user preferences regarding the content.

7. The device according to claim 1, wherein the level adjustment means (12, 13) are arranged for adapting the respective sound levels to the signal characteristics of each associated audio channel (AC1, AC2).

8. The device according to claim 7, wherein the level adjustment means (12, 13) are arranged for speech detection.

9. The device according to claim 8, wherein the level adjustment means (12, 13) are further arranged for speech analysis.

10. The device according to claims 5 and 7, wherein the level adjustment means (12, 13) are arranged for temporarily adjusting the sound level of a channel (MC, AC1, AC2) in response to the content and/or signal characteristics of at least one channel (MC; AC1).

11. The device according to claim 1, wherein the level adjustment means (12, 13) are arranged for gradually adjusting the sound level.

12. The device according to claim 1, wherein the level adjustment means (12, 13) are arranged for clipping, compressing and/or filtering audio signals contained in the channels.

13. The device according to claim 1, wherein the main channel (MC) and the at least one auxiliary channel (AC1) are rendered by different transducers (2, 3, 4).

14. The device of claim 13, further provided with transducer selecting means for selecting a transducer (2, 3, 4) which renders the main channel (MC) and/or the at least one auxiliary channel (AC1, AC2).

15. A level adjustment means (11, 12, 13) for use in the device according to claim 1.

16. A remote control unit (6) for use with the device according to claim 1, comprising selection interface components (62, 63), such as buttons, for selecting the main channel (MC).

17. The remote control unit according to claim 16, further comprising a first sound level interface component (61), such as a toggle stick, for setting a ratio of sound levels of rendered channels (MC, AC1, AC2).

18. The remote control unit according to claim 16 or 17, further comprising second sound level interface components (64, 65), such as knobs, for manually adjusting the sound levels of rendered channels (MC, AC1, AC2).

19. An audio system comprising a device (1) according to claim 1.

20. A home entertainment system comprising a device (1) according to claim 1.

21. A television system (9) comprising a device (1) according to any of claim 1.

22. The system according to claim 19, 20 or 21, wherein the main channel (MC) is rendered by a transducer (AC1) which is located centrally relative to the system.

23. A method of controlling the sound levels of a group of audio channels comprising a main channel (MC) and at least one auxiliary channel (AC1) which can be rendered simultaneously, the method comprising the steps of:

- selecting, under user control, the main channel, and
- automatically adjusting the sound level of the at least one auxiliary channel (AC1) relative to the main channel.

24. The method according to claim 23, wherein the sound level of the at least one auxiliary channel (AC1; AC2) is set using a plurality of pre-set relative sound levels.

25. The method according to claim 23, wherein the respective sound levels of the at least one auxiliary channel (AC1; AC2) are adapted to the content of each associated audio channel.

26. The method according to claim 23, wherein the respective sound levels of the at least one auxiliary channel (AC1; AC2) are adapted to the signal characteristics of each associated audio channel.

27. The method according to claim 25 or 26, wherein speech detection is used.

28. The method according to claim 27, wherein formant detection, prosody detection and/or keyword detection is used.

29. A computer program product for carrying out the method according to claim 22.